

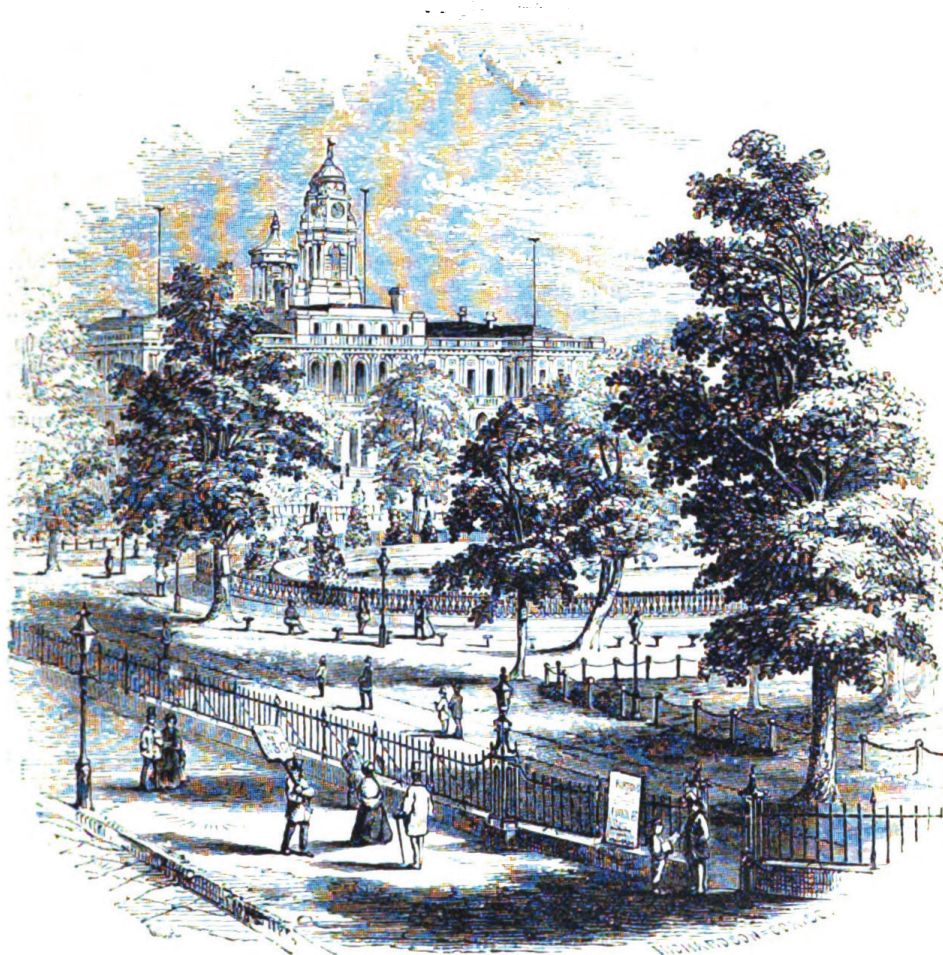
PUBLIC BUILDINGS OF NEW-YORK.



End View of City Hall.

NEW-YORK has not much to boast of in the splendor of its public buildings, numerous and extensive as they are, with the exception of the City Hall, which is an architectural wonder; not intrinsi-

cally, but relatively, standing as it has, until within a few years past, a marble oasis surrounded by a desert of bricks and mortar. The marvel of it is that such a building could have been built at all in the infancy and poverty of the city, and that it should have stood nearly fifty years without exerting the slightest influence upon the tastes of our people who were continually building and rebuilding. It was only another proof that education in taste, as in morals and science, must be progressive, and that a community must learn their alphabet in art, as well as in letters, before they can learn to read and understand the productions of enlightened minds. We know when the City Hall was built, and by whom, but how it was, why there should have been such an outbreak of taste and public liberality just then, so disproportioned to the exigencies of the times, without antecedents or followers, has always been to us a subject of especial marvel. Even at the present day, when the wealth and popula-



City Hall.

tion of the city have increased ten-fold, the new public buildings are comparatively mean and barbarous. There stands the beautiful City Hall, with an offspring of hideous Egyptian, Greek, and Gothic structures, without a lineament of the graceful features or elegant form of their progenitor. It is marvellous that the city fathers should have passed in and out of the City Hall day by day for half a century, and never have been imbued with a feeling of love for the beautiful edifice which was their official home, nor have imparted something of its grace and elegance to the new structures which they erected for municipal uses. But such, unfortunately, is the fact; and the City Hall remains a splendid exception to the tasteless and uninformed character of the other civic buildings of the metropolis of the New World. But, something of the wonder which the existence of such a building as the City Hall excites, subsides when

we find that it was during the mayoralty of such enlightened men as Edward Livingston and De Witt Clinton, that the building was planned and completed. The corner stone was laid in September 1803, and it was nearly ten years in building. The front and two ends are of white marble, but the rear is of a very fine dark brown sandstone, not used, as has been ignorantly supposed, because its back was to the then rural districts, for the builders of the City Hall were not so cramped in their ideas as to imagine that New-York would never extend itself higher up than the Park; but for the same reason that Cologne Cathedral is unornamented on its northern side, because it lies always in shadow, and the warm tint of the stone is more suitable to its aspect than the cold glitter of white marble would be. Let any one look at the City Hall with this thought in his mind, and the brown stone of the rear will no longer look incongruous or improper.

Though we can make this apology for the rear of the City Hall, which is as beautiful as the southern front, we have none to offer for its rusticated, brown stone basement, nor for its awkward wooden belfry, which has been recently added. The names of the architects were Macomb and Mangin, and as they left no other evidences of their genius, the City Hall must be regarded as an inspiration.

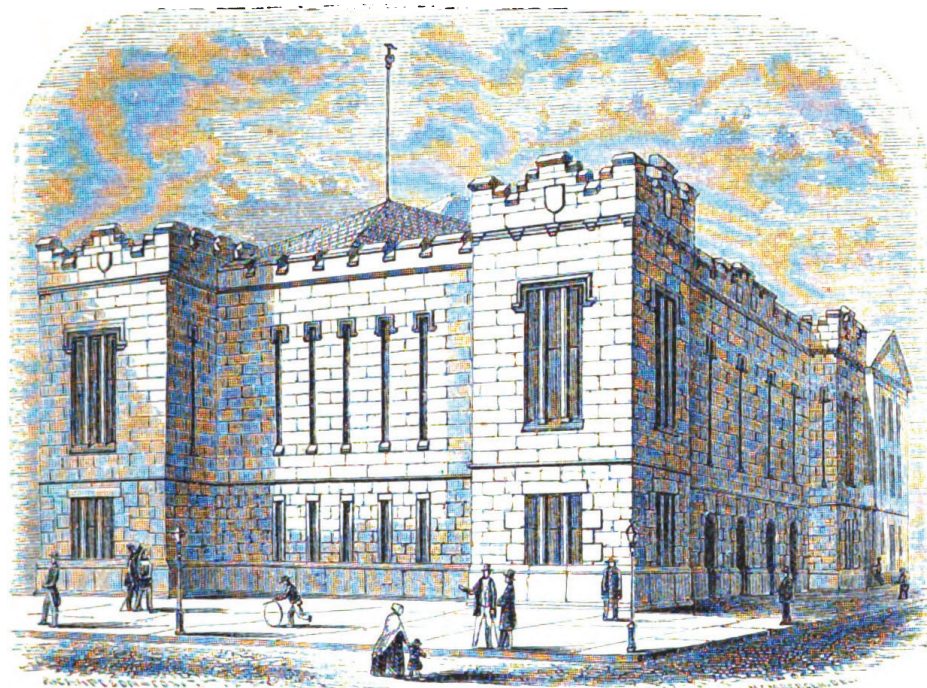
But, the City Hall of New-York is an exceptional institution in more respects than its architectural exterior, and as respects all other public buildings in the Union. It is in this Hall that has been commenced a permanent gallery of historical art, which, even at the present time is of great value; but, to our posterity, it will prove a precious treasure; in it are preserved the portraits of all the governors of the State, and of the mayors of the city; they are hung in the noble suite of apartments known as the Governor's Room, and in other parts of the building are the portraits of many of our eminent men and military heroes. This plan of preserving the portraits of the chief magistrates of the State and city, is one which should be imitated, not only by the nation, but by each of the States and cities; it would be a cheap way of encouraging art,

and establishing galleries of incalculable value in a historical point of view.

In the Governor's Room are full length portraits of the twelve governors of the State, from Lewis down to Fish, including Tompkins, Clinton, Van Buren, Marcy, Seward and Young; two of them are by Trumbull, and the rest by Catlin, Vanderlyn, Inman, Weir, Page, Elliott, Gray, and Hicks; there are, also, the portraits, *en buste*, of twenty-two mayors, and full lengths of Presidents Washington, Monroe, Jackson, and Taylor; Lafayette by S. F. B. Morse, General Monckton by the same artist; and Generals McComb, Brown, Scott, and Swift; Commodores Perry, Decatur, and Bainbridge; there are also original portraits of Columbus, Governor Stuyvesant, Bolivar, Hendrick Hudson, and Paez, General Williams, and of Mr. Valentine, who has been many years clerk of the Common Council. In the Chamber of the Board of Aldermen, a very beautiful apartment, are full length portraits of Washington and George Clinton, painted by Trumbull, and of John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, by Weimar; in the chamber of the Assistant Aldermen, a department of the city government which has been abolished by the new Charter, are full lengths of Commodores Hull and



City Prison.



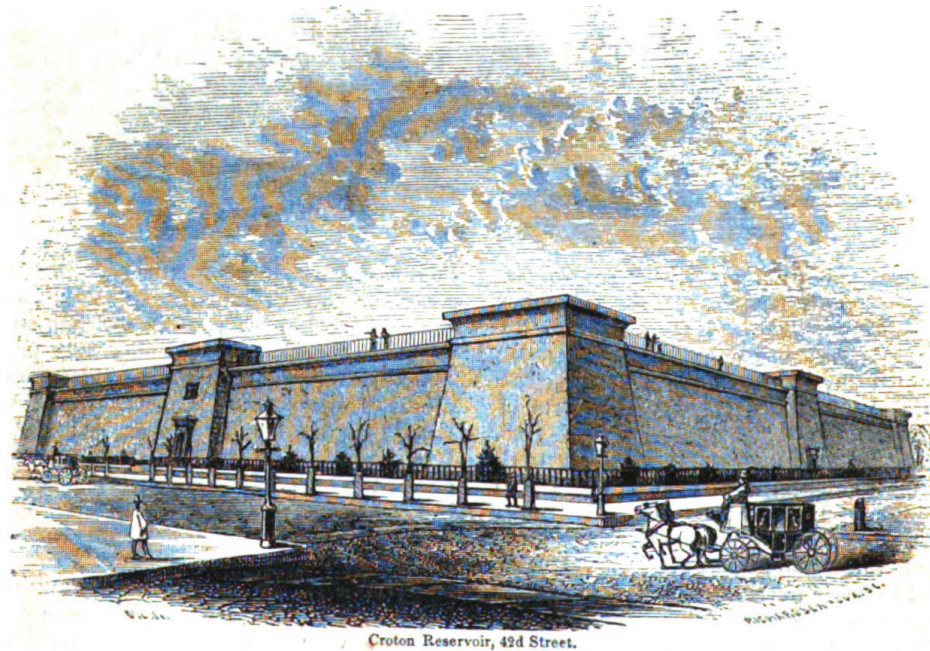
Lower Arsenal.

McDonough by Jarvis; in room No. 8 is a half-length portrait of the renowned High-Constable, Jacob Hays, and, in the Mayor's Office is a half-length portrait, painted by Mooney, of Achmet Ben Ahmed, the captain of the *Imaum* of Muscat's frigate, which visited New-York about ten years since. In the Governor's Room there are marble busts of De Witt Clinton and Henry Clay, in the chamber of the Board of Aldermen there are busts of John Jay and Chief Justice Marshall, and in other parts of the Hall there are busts of Thomas Addis Emmet, and Chancellor Kent, and marble tablets in honor of several distinguished members of the New-York bar. Until within a few years past there was a noble banqueting room in the City Hall, where the city feasts used to be held on occasions of high public festivals, such as the Fourth of July, when the Mayor presided at the feasts surrounded by the Aldermen and their distinguished guests, and mighty bowls of punch were quaffed, and enormous tureens of turtle soup eaten for the good of the city. But these civic feasts have fallen into disuse, and the magnificent apartment, with its crimson curtains, has been made into two mean-looking court rooms, by a dingy partition. In one of the rooms is kept the City Library, the mere existence of which is hardly known

to the majority of our citizens. But it contains many valuable books, and a very choice collection of rare engravings and interesting works of art, which were presented to the city through the agency of Mons. Vattemare by Louis Philippe of France, and other foreign rulers. The Law Library of the New-York bar is in one of the lower apartments of the Hall, but it is only accessible to members. The famous "tea-room," where the Aldermen used to feast at the public cost, is a rather dingy apartment in the occupancy of the keeper of the Hall, the tea-room expenses having been denied by law. The tea-room was so called on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, for the potations most indulged in, in that convivial apartment, were mostly champagne and brandy. The City Hall was sufficiently spacious to afford offices for all the municipal business of the city, besides rooms for the United States Courts, but it is now insufficient for the accommodation of the municipal offices alone, and, besides appropriating the entire extent of the old Alms House in the rear, a spacious Hall has been erected in which the newly organized Council under the reformed charter will hold its sessions; at the east end of the Hall is the Hall of Records, the old debtor's prison modernized with porches and columns. The buildings used for municipal offices, which are

clustered together in the rear of the City Hall, are of a very miscellaneous character, and appear to have been dropped down by accident, or to have been placed there temporarily with a view to some future arrangement. One of them, as we have mentioned, was, originally, an alms house, erected before external ornaments were considered as essentials to that class of public buildings; another is a circular house, which was originally put up for the exhibition of a panorama; another was a rough stone building, in which poor debtors used to be incarcerated for the crime of poverty, but it has been stuccoed, and pedimented, and pillared in the style of a Greek temple, while there are two new edifices, both constructed of brown freestone, but, to keep up the general

confusion, made of unequal dimensions, and as little in harmony as possible. Not far above the public buildings in the Park, is the City Prison, commonly called the Tombs, from the sepulchral style of its architecture. It occupies an entire square, with its principal front on Centre-street, as represented in the engraving. The ponderous and gloomy character of Egyptian architecture harmonizes esthetically with the purposes of a prison, but it is both barbarous and costly, and there is no good reason for erecting in the midst of a city an object which has such a nightmarish influence on its neighborhood. The ground on which the City Prison stands was once a swamp, its cells are damp and unwholesome, and the whole interior is dark and dismal; it is con-



Croton Reservoir, 42d Street.

structed of huge blocks of granite, which are oppressive to look upon, and must have a chilling effect upon the nervous system of passengers through Centre-street, who have within them undivulged crimes, in it is held the Court of Sessions, and all public executions take place in one of its courts.

In the immediate neighborhood of the Egyptian Tombs is another building equally gloomy in appearance, but of a different style of architecture, if such a word can be applied to a building that is devoid of style.

The New Armory, or down-town Arsenal, stands on the corner of White and Elm streets, with a frontage of one hundred and thirty-one feet, by eighty-four feet. It is built of a dark blue granite,

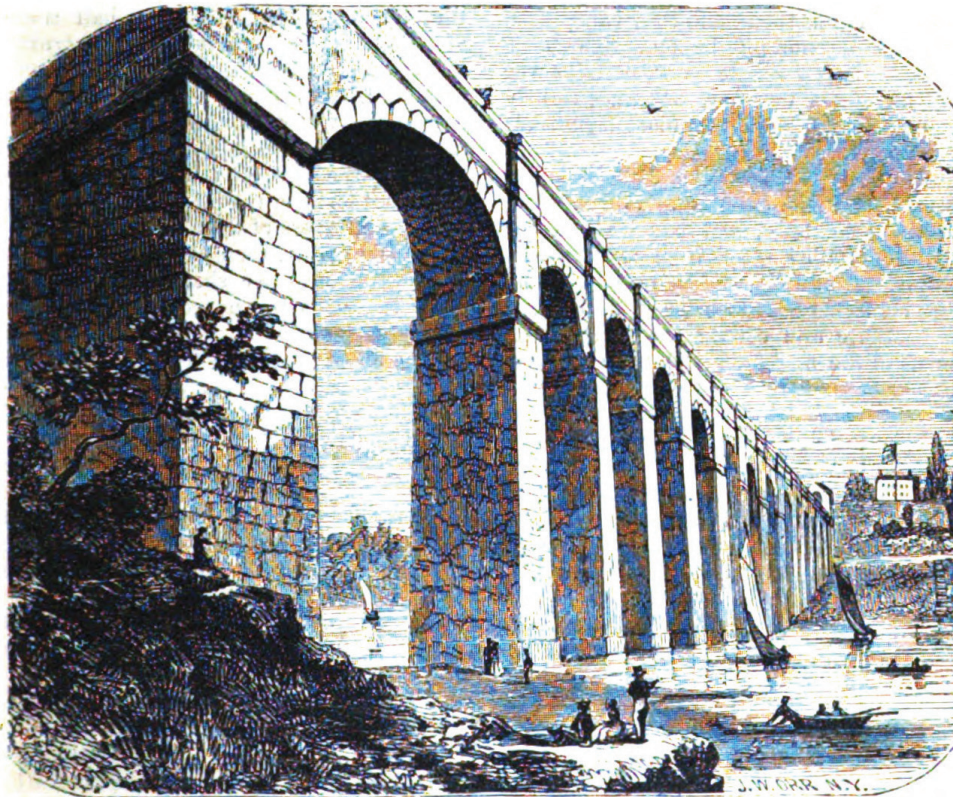
with square-headed, narrow windows, a battlemented parapet, and flanked by square towers. It is employed as a receptacle for the ordnance of the first division of the State Artillery, the lower story being appropriated for a gun room, and the second floor for a drill room. It is wholly devoid of ornament, but is substantial, and, if it should ever be needed as a place of refuge it could resist a very strong force. But, we imagine that its capacity as a fortress will never be tested by a siege. On the roof is a telegraph pole intended to communicate by signals with the State arsenal further up town.

But the greater number of the buildings belonging to the city are not to be found in the streets and avenues; the hospitals, prisons, alms-houses, and nurseries, are

built upon the beautiful little islands in the East River, whose green slopes rise from the rapid current, near Hell Gate. On Blackwell's Island, the largest of the group, are the Penitentiary, the Lunatic Asylum and the City Alms Houses; on Ward's Island are the extensive hospitals for diseased immigrants; and on Randall's Island the nurseries for the city orphans.

One of the most prominent of the structures belonging to the city is the Croton Reservoir, between 40th and 42d streets, which is sufficiently familiar to all the visitors to the Crystal Palace. This immense granite structure, built as solidly and likely to endure as long as the pyramids, is the beaker out of which a population not much below a million drink their daily draughts; it is the great fountain of health and comfort to the entire population of our mighty metropolis, whence their fountains and hydrants are daily supplied. It seems scarcely possible that such a reservoir, vast as it is, should contain a sufficient quantity of water to feed the almost innumerable drains that are constantly running from it. But this Egyptian reservoir on Murray

Hill, which looks so vast, holds but twenty millions of gallons of water; a mere punch bowl, compared with the receiving reservoir lying between 79th and 86th streets, covering an area of thirty-five acres, and containing one hundred and fifty millions of gallons, while this, again, is but a wine cooler in comparison with the first reservoir at the Croton River, forty miles distant, among the breezy hills of Westchester, which is five miles long. These immense reservoirs are trifling when compared with the whole aqueduct, which is forty miles in length, and, by the side of which all aqueducts of ancient and modern times are dwarfed. The most impressive and majestic of the visible parts of this splendid work is the High Bridge across the Harlem River. This aqueduct bridge is the most magnificent structure which New-York can boast of; it is 1450 feet in length, and 114 feet above the level of high water; through this lofty artery flows the daily life of nearly a million of inhabitants, and it is appalling to think of the consequences of an accident to so important an agent in supplying the daily needs of so vast a population.



High Bridge.